

DRAFT

**INITIAL STUDY
NEGATIVE DECLARATION**

PIEDRAS GRANDES ROAD CLOSURE PROJECT

December 2007



State of California
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

NEGATIVE DECLARATION

PROJECT: **PIEDRAS GRANDES ROAD CLOSURE PROJECT**

LEAD AGENCY: California Department of Parks and Recreation

AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS: The Initial Study for this Negative Declaration is available for review at:

- Colorado Desert District Headquarters
California Department of Parks & Recreation
200 Palm Canyon Drive
Borrego Springs, CA 92004
- San Diego County Library
Borrego Springs Branch
571-A Palm Canyon Drive
Borrego Springs, CA 92004
- San Diego County Library
Jacumba Branch
44605 Old Highway 80
Jacumba, CA 91934

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Approximately 560 acres of the Piedras Grandes region in southern Anza-Borrego Desert State Park would be closed to motorized vehicles and overnight camping to protect sensitive cultural resources. The area would still be open for day use hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian activity. The existing jeep road leading into Piedras Grandes, at its junction with the dirt road leading to Dos Cabezas Spring, would be closed to motorized vehicle traffic, and the jeep road converted to a recreational trail. A small parking area would be created at this road intersection. Interpretive signs and/or displays would be placed to educate the public on the significance and sensitivity of the area.

A copy of the Initial Study is attached. Questions or comments regarding this Initial Study/Negative Declaration may be addressed to:

Jim Dice
California Department of Parks & Recreation
Colorado Desert District
200 Palm Canyon Drive
Borrego Springs, CA 92004

Pursuant to Section 21082.1 of the California Environmental Quality Act, the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has independently reviewed and analyzed the Initial Study and Negative Declaration for the proposed project and finds that these

documents reflect the independent judgment of DPR. DPR, as lead agency, also confirms that the project mitigation measures detailed in these documents are feasible and will be implemented as stated in the Negative Declaration.

Michael L. Wells
District Superintendent

Date

David N. Lawhead
Environmental Coordinator

Date

TABLE of CONTENTS

<u>Chapter/Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
1 INTRODUCTION.....	2
2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION.....	5
3 ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST.....	11
I. Aesthetics.....	14
II. Agricultural Resources.....	15
III. Air Quality.....	16
IV. Biological Resources.....	17
V. Cultural Resources.....	19
VI. Geology and Soils.....	30
VII. Hazards and Hazardous Materials.....	32
VIII. Hydrology and Water Quality.....	34
IX. Land Use and Planning.....	36
X. Mineral Resources.....	37
XI. Noise.....	38
XII. Population and Housing.....	39
XIII. Public Services.....	40
XIV. Recreation.....	41
XV. Transportation/Traffic.....	43
XVI. Utilities and Service Systems.....	45
4 MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE.....	46
5 SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES.....	48
6 REFERENCES.....	48
7 REPORT PREPARATION.....	50

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND REGULATORY GUIDANCE

The Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND) has been prepared by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed Piedras Grandes Road Closure Project at Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, San Diego County, California. This document has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code §21000 *et seq.*, and the State CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations (CCR) §15000 *et seq.*

An Initial Study is conducted by a lead agency to determine if a project may have a significant effect on the environment [CEQA Guidelines §15063(a)]. If there is substantial evidence that a project may have a significant effect on the environment, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be prepared, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15064(a). However, if the lead agency determines that revisions in the project plans or proposals made by or agreed to by the applicant mitigate the potentially significant effects to a less-than-significant level, a Mitigated Negative Declaration may be prepared instead of an EIR [CEQA Guidelines §15070(b)]. The lead agency prepares a written statement describing the reasons a proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment and, therefore, why an EIR need not be prepared. This IS/ND conforms to the content requirements under CEQA Guidelines §15071.

1.2 LEAD AGENCY

The lead agency is the public agency with primary approval authority over the proposed project. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15051(b)(1), "the lead agency will normally be an agency with general governmental powers, such as a city or county, rather than an agency with a single or limited purpose." The lead agency for the proposed project is DPR. The contact person for the lead agency is:

Mark Jorgensen, Park Superintendent
Anza-Borrego Desert State Park
CA Dept. of Parks and Recreation
200 Palm Canyon Dr.
Borrego Springs, CA 92004
(760) 767-4962

All inquiries regarding environmental compliance for this project, including comments on this environmental document should be addressed to:

Jim Dice, Senior Environmental Scientist
CA Dept. of Parks and Recreation

Colorado Desert District
200 Palm Canyon Dr.
Borrego Springs, CA 92004
Fax: (760) 767-3427
e-mail: jdice@parks.ca.gov

1.3 PURPOSE AND DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

The purpose of this document is to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed Piedras Grandes Road Closure Project at Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

This document is organized as follows:

- Chapter 1 - Introduction.
This chapter provides an introduction to the project and describes the purpose and organization of this document.
- Chapter 2 - Project Description.
This chapter describes the reasons for the project, scope of the project, and project objectives.
- Chapter 3 - Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures.
This chapter identifies the significance of potential environmental impacts, explains the environmental setting for each environmental issue, and evaluates the potential impacts identified in the CEQA Environmental (Initial Study) Checklist. Mitigation measures are incorporated, where appropriate, to reduce potentially significant impacts to a less-than-significant level.
- Chapter 4 - Mandatory Findings of Significance
This chapter identifies and summarizes the overall significance of any potential impacts to natural and cultural resources, cumulative impacts, and impact to humans, as identified in the Initial Study.
- Chapter 5 - Summary of Mitigation Measures.
This chapter summarizes the mitigation measures incorporated into the project as a result of the Initial Study.
- Chapter 6 - References.
This chapter identifies the references and sources used in the preparation of this IS/ND. It also provides a list of those involved in the preparation of this document.
- Chapter 7 - Report Preparation
This chapter provides a list of those involved in the preparation of this document.

1.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Chapter 3 of this document contains the Environmental (Initial Study) Checklist that identifies the potential environmental impacts (by environmental issue) and a brief discussion of each impact resulting from implementation of the proposed project.

Based on the IS and supporting environmental analysis provided in this document, the proposed Piedras Grandes Road Closure Project would result in less-than-significant impacts for the following issues: aesthetics, agricultural resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, and utilities and service systems.

In accordance with §15064(f) of the CEQA Guidelines, a ND shall be prepared if the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment . Based on the available project information and the environmental analysis presented in this document, there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project would have a significant effect on the environment. It is proposed that a Negative Declaration be adopted in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines.

CHAPTER 2

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND) has been prepared by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed Piedras Grandes Road Closure Project in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, located in, San Diego County, California. The proposed project would close approximately 560 acres of the Piedras Grandes region in southern Anza-Borrego Desert State Park to motorized vehicles and overnight camping to protect sensitive cultural resources. The area would still be open for day use hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian use. The existing jeep road leading into the Piedras Grandes site, at its junction with the dirt road leading to Dos Cabezas Spring, would be closed to motorized vehicle traffic, and the jeep road converted to a recreational trail. A small parking area would be created at this road intersection. Interpretive signs and/or displays would be placed to educate the public on the significance and sensitivity of the area.

2.2 PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed project is located at the southern end of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park in San Diego County (Figure 1). The 560-acre closure site is located on the west side of County Route S-2, several miles west of the town of Ocotillo. The name “Piedras Grandes” is descriptive of the terrain in this area, being dominated by large boulders. These large boulder assemblages surround on the north, south and west a large “U”-shaped alluvial fan. The dead-end jeep road proposed for closure extends up this alluvial fan and gives ready access to the large boulder features (Figure 2).

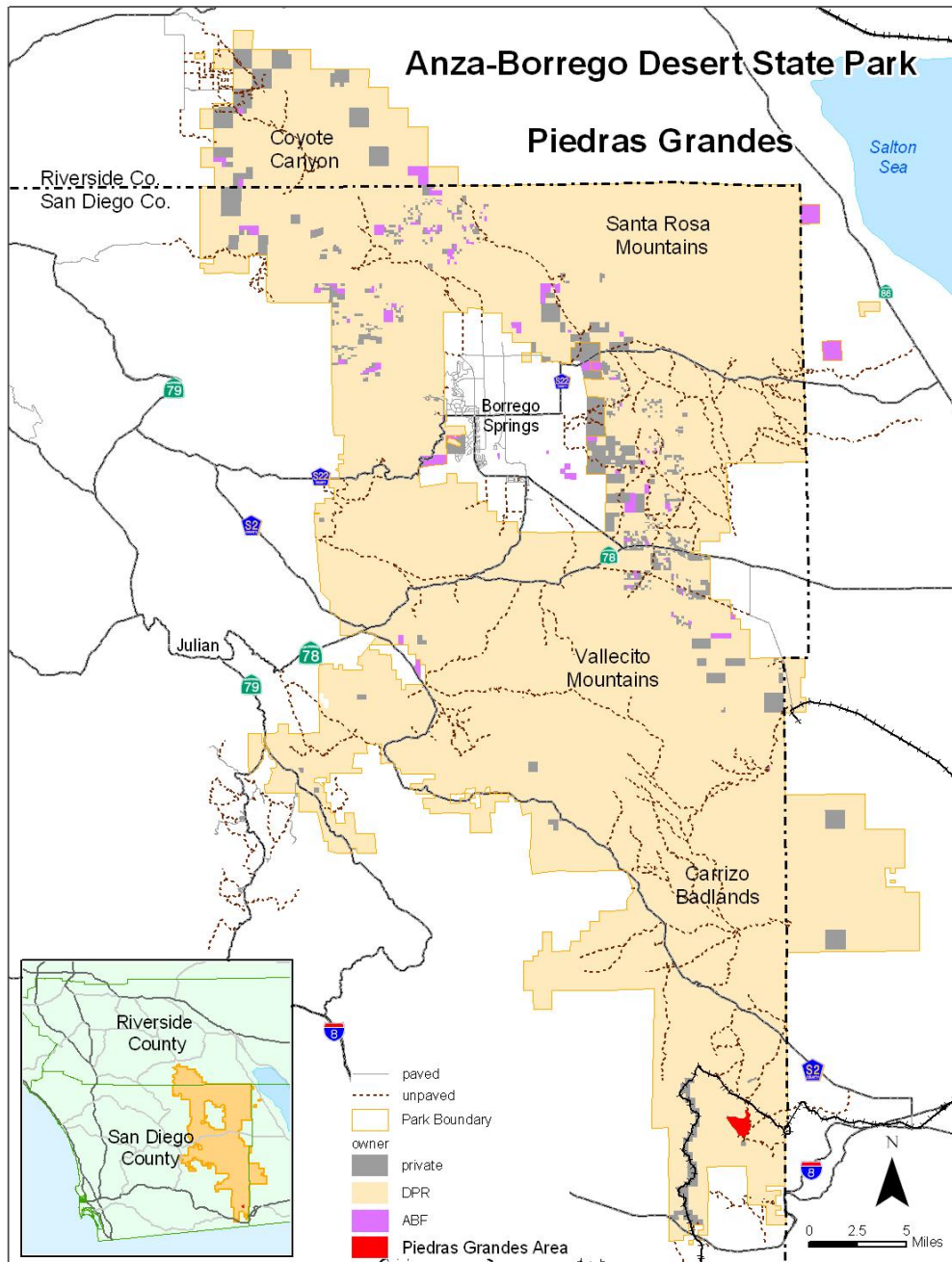


Figure 1. Project Location

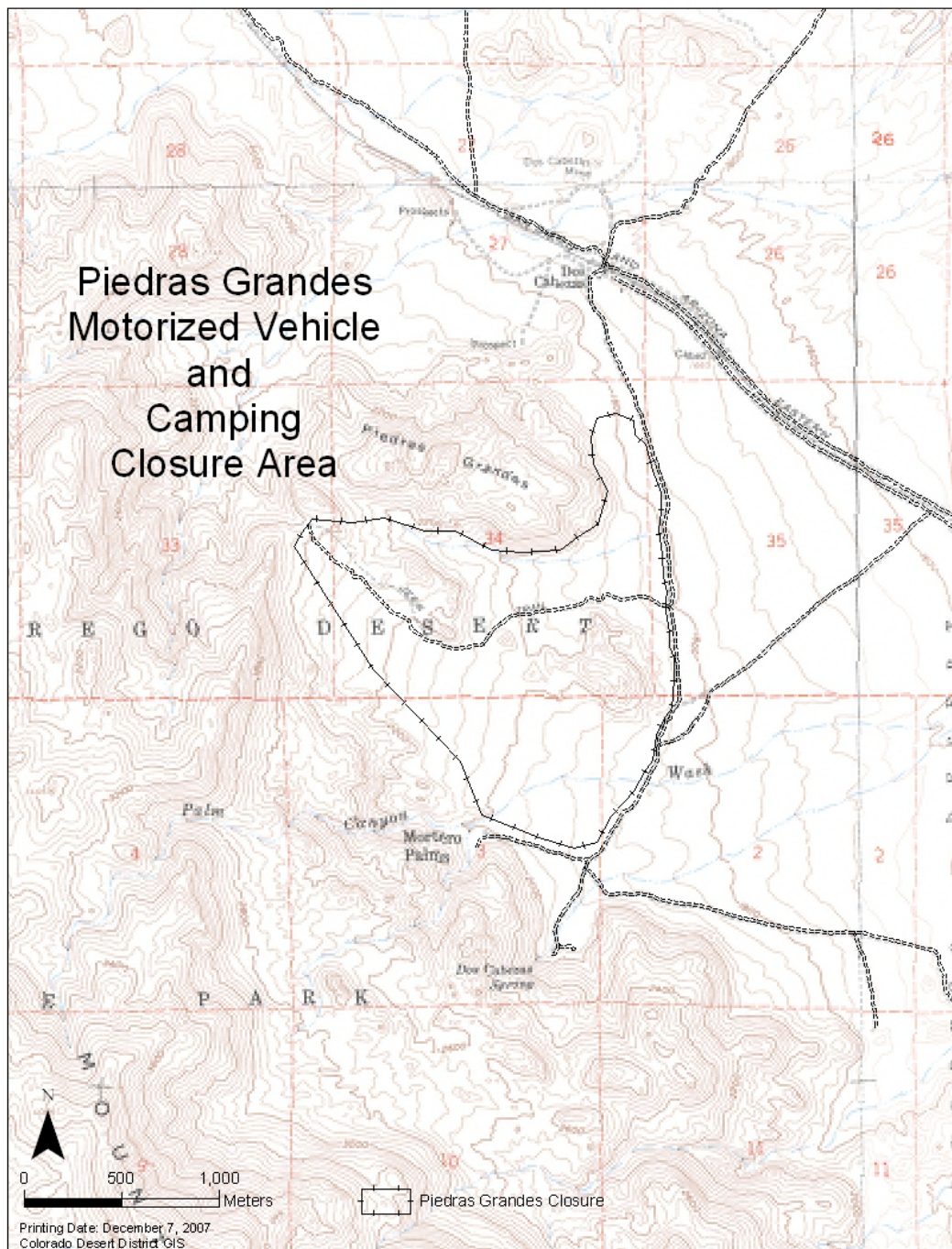


Figure 2. Piedras Grandes Closure Area

2.3 BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

The Piedras Grandes area has a long history of human occupation and use. Because of the shelter the large rocks provide from sun, wind and rain, and the nearby presence of natural springs and water catch basins, the area was occupied for many generations

by the local Native Americans. The site also provides panoramic views to the east, offering a good vantage point for hunting of game, and the detection of possible enemies. Early white visitors and railroad workers have also had an impact upon the area, and looting of artifacts was already underway when the first scientific archeological research was done in the area by Malcolm C. Rodgers in the 1930s. A number of in-depth surveys and assessments have been conducted by other researchers since that time, and have documented extensive cultural artifacts and resources, including pictographs, rock shelters, numerous habitation sites, and human remains. The most recent assessment of the status of the cultural resources at Piedras Grandes, and the impacts from visitor use of the area, was completed in August 2006, by Dr. Joan Schneider, Associate State Park Archeologist (*An Assessment of Visitor Impacts to Cultural Resources in the Piedras Grandes Area, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, California, and Recommendations for Management of Cultural Resources*)

As the population of southern California continues to grow, and the number of visitors to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park continues to increase, added pressure is put upon the parks resources. This has proven especially true with regard to the Piedras Grandes area. Ready access to the important cultural sites by motorized vehicles, and prolonged unsupervised camping in the area has brought recreational activities in direct conflict with the preservation of the unique cultural resources of the Piedras Grandes region. Damage to the cultural sites takes primarily three forms: unintentional impacts, intentional vandalism, and illegal artifact hunting/removal. All have played a role in the degradation of the sites in the Piedras Grandes Closure Area, and all need to be controlled to prevent further damage.

2.4 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The objective of the project is to reduce human recreational impacts to the Piedras Grandes area to a level that can be adequately managed by the park to insure that the cultural resources of the area are maintained without further degradation. A secondary objective is to increase the public understanding of the significance and sensitivity of these cultural resources by placing interpretive signs and other information at the site.

2.5 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project is a Superintendent's Order to close the 560-acre Piedras Grandes region of southern Anza-Borrego Desert State Park to motorized vehicle traffic, and to overnight camping. The unnamed jeep trail, that currently exits the unpaved road leading to Dos Cabezas Spring, into the Piedras Grandes site will be closed and barricaded to prevent vehicle entry. The jeep trail to be closed is approximately 1.3 miles in length, and is a dead-end road (Figure 2). Although camping is currently allowed in the Piedras Grandes area (primitive camping, no facilities provided) under the general rules governing Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the Park Superintendent has the authority to close and/or restrict access to areas of the park if recreational activities threaten park resources. Because of the on-going negative effects of vehicle access and overnight camping in the Piedras Grandes area, the closure is deemed necessary to assure the long-term conservation of the cultural resources in Piedras

Grandes. This project will also involve a general clean-up of the area to remove accumulated debris and restore some of the damaged archeological sites to a more natural condition. State Parks archeologists will conduct post-closure studies to document the change in recreation-related impacts.

The Piedras Grandes area will still remain open for day use by the public in the form of hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian use. The mountain bike and equestrian uses will be required to stay on the existing jeep trail, while hikers can explore the areas off-trail. A small parking area will be established at the closure intersection at the east end of the jeep trail to accommodate park visitors, and act as a staging area for travels into the Piedras Grandes area. The parking area will be sited on an already disturbed area, and not impact native vegetation. The park plans on installing a number of interpretive signs and other materials at the parking area, and elsewhere in the vicinity to explain the significance and sensitivity of the cultural and biological resources of the Piedras Grandes area.

2.6 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The project will be implemented in the early spring of 2008. It is anticipated that the bulk of recreational use will be over by this time of year, as the higher temperatures that start in spring tend to reduce visitor use.

2.7 VISITATION TO

Annually, on average, over 600,000 people visit Anza-Borrego Desert State Park , with that number climbing to close to one million visitors during an above average wildflower season. Approximately 85 percent of visitor attendance occurs in the cooler 6-month period of November through April. Approximately 76 percent of visitation is day use, and 75 percent of park visitation is to the northern half of the park. The nearest dedicated campground in the southern portion of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is the Bow Willow Campground, which averages approximately 53,000 visitors per year (ABDSP General Plan, 2005). There are no specific visitation statistics for the Piedras Grandes area, however, an estimate is that between 500 and 1,000 visitors camp overnight in the area each year.

2.8 CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL PLANS AND POLICIES

The guiding principals and policies for the management of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park are contained in the park's General Plan, completed and adopted by the State Park and Recreation Commission in 2005. Some key park goals and guidelines within the General Plan relevant to this proposed project include:

“Land management actions will be based upon sound scientific data. However if such data does not currently exist and resource integrity appears in imminent danger, management action will be taken with the best available information and expertise of park staff and other associated experts (Section 3.3.1.1).”

“Cultural Resource Goal 3 – Protect, stabilize, and preserve cultural resources within ABDSP. Guideline 3a - Assess the effects of visitor use (camping, unauthorized collecting, vandalism, vehicles, hikers, mountain bikes, horses, and other potential modes of transportation) and natural erosion on archaeological sites. The condition of sites located within areas of the Park receiving regular visitation (e.g., Coyote Canyon, Borrego Palm Canyon, Culp Valley, Mine Wash, Hapaha Flat, Blair Valley, Indian Canyon, Bow Willow, Mountain Palm Springs, **Piedras Grandes**, Indian Hill, Dos Cabezas, and others) should be regularly evaluated. Mitigative measures should be implemented where appreciable damage to sites is identified. Such measures can include, site-specific closures, moving roads, trails, or camping locations away from archaeological sites, revegetation, sign placement, fencing, site burial, and other methods (Section 3.3.1.4)”

“Visitor Use and Opportunities (Recreation) – Some recreational activities may have negative effects on sensitive desert resources.... Specific management tools are necessary to guide adverse visitor impacts around the areas needing extra levels of protection. Potential future increases in park visitors could multiply these negative effects.....An overriding goal of the General Plan is to provide opportunity for visitors of all ability levels to experience the wide variety of settings and resources that the Park has to offer without losing those same protected resources that attract visitors in the first place (Section 3.3.1.7).”

2.9 DISCRETIONARY APPROVALS

The proposed Superintendent’s Order to effect the closure of the Piedras Grandes area to motorized vehicles and overnight camping does not require any additional discretionary approvals.

2.10 RELATED PROJECTS

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, as committed to in the ABDSP General Plan, will in the future prepare a park-wide cultural resources management plan. Preliminary work on that plan has begun, but completion is not imminent. The proposed Piedras Grandes Closure Project will be integrated into that broader plan.

CHAPTER 3

ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Project Title: | Piedras Grandes Road Closure Plan |
| 2. Lead Agency Name & Address: | California Department of Parks and Recreation
(see address below) |
| 3. Contact Person & Phone Number: | David Lawhead, (760) 767-4315 |
| 4. Project Location: | Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, San Diego County |
| 5. Project Sponsor Name & Address: | California Department of Parks and Recreation
Colorado Desert District
200 Palm Canyon Drive
Borrego Springs, CA 92004 |
| 6. General Plan Designation: | Most of the Piedras Grandes closure area is designated State Wilderness. The exception is the jeep road, which is by definition excluded from wilderness designation. |
| 7. Zoning: | NA |
| 8. Description of Project: | Approximately 560 acres of the Piedras Grandes region in southern Anza-Borrego Desert State Park would be closed to motorized vehicles and overnight camping to protect sensitive cultural resources. The area would still be open for day use hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian activity. The existing jeep road leading into the Piedras Grandes site, at its junction with the road leading to Dos Cabezas Spring, would be closed to motorized vehicle traffic, and the jeep road converted to a recreational trail. Interpretive signs and/or displays would be placed to educate the public on the significance and sensitivity of the area. |
| 9. Surrounding Land Uses & Setting: | Refer to Chapter 3 of this document (Section IX, Land Use Planning) |
| 10. Approval Required from Other Public Agencies | None |

1. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact", as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

<input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics	<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality
<input type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Geology/Soils
<input type="checkbox"/> Hazards & Hazardous Materials	<input type="checkbox"/> Hydrology/Water Quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Land Use/Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Noise	<input type="checkbox"/> Population/Housing
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation/Traffic
<input type="checkbox"/> Utilities/Service Systems	<input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Findings of Significance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None

DETERMINATION

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

I find that the proposed project **COULD NOT** have a significant effect on the environment and a **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared. X

I find that, although the original scope of the proposed project **COULD** have had a significant effect on the environment, there **WILL NOT** be a significant effect because revisions/mitigations to the project have been made by or agreed to by the applicant. A **MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared. ☐

I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a significant effect on the environment and an **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** or its functional equivalent will be prepared. ☐

I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated impact" on the environment. However, at least one impact has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document, pursuant to applicable legal standards, and has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis, as described in the report's attachments. An **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required, but it must analyze only the impacts not sufficiently addressed in previous documents. ☐

I find that, although the proposed project could have had a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects have been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or Negative Declaration, pursuant to applicable standards, and have been avoided or mitigated, pursuant to an earlier EIR, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, all impacts have been avoided or mitigated to a less-than-significant level and no further action is required. ☐

Environmental Coordinator

Date

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. A brief explanation is required for all answers, except "No Impact", that are adequately supported by the information sources cited. A "No Impact" answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact does not apply to the project being evaluated (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A "No Impact" answer should be explained where it is based on general or project-specific factors (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).
2. All answers must consider the whole of the project-related effects, both direct and indirect, including off-site, cumulative, construction, and operational impacts.
3. Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, the checklist answers must indicate whether that impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is appropriate when there is sufficient evidence that a substantial or potentially substantial adverse change may occur in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project that cannot be mitigated below a level of significance. If there are one or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required.
4. A "Mitigated Negative Declaration" (Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated) applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures, prior to declaration of project approval, has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level.
5. Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR (including a General Plan) or Negative Declaration [CCR, Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA, § 15063(c)(3)(D)]. References to an earlier analysis should:
 - a) Identify the earlier analysis and state where it is available for review.
 - b) Indicate which effects from the environmental checklist were adequately analyzed in the earlier document, pursuant to applicable legal standards, and whether these effects were adequately addressed by mitigation measures included in that analysis.
 - c) Describe the mitigation measures in this document that were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and indicate to what extent they address site-specific conditions for this project.
6. Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate references to information sources for potential impacts into the checklist or appendix (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances, biological assessments). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should include an indication of the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.
7. A source list should be appended to this document. Sources used or individuals contacted should be listed in the source list and cited in the discussion.
8. Explanation(s) of each issue should identify:
 - a) the criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate the significance of the impact addressed by each question **and**
 - b) the mitigation measures, if any, prescribed to reduce the impact below the level of significance.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

I. AESTHETICS.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Piedras Grandes area is a unique aesthetic feature of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The large boulder associations that dominate the landscape are what give this area its primary aesthetic appeal (Figure 3). In addition, certain overview points within the area also provide broad panoramic views of the low-lying desert terrain to the east.

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

DISCUSSION

a and c) The closure of the Piedras Grandes area is not expected to degrade the scenic vistas or rock formations within the area. In fact, the closure would benefit the natural views by removing vehicles, tents, or other camping equipment from the area. The area's aesthetic values are also expected to improve by the removal of trash and other materials brought into the area by vehicle and left behind. One possible impact to aesthetic values is the placement of interpretive displays of signage to educate park visitors about the area. Interpretive signage is expected to be small in size, and sensitively placed to reduce impacts. It is anticipated that any larger displays would be placed at the parking area where the jeep road will be closed, an area that is already disturbed. This would also be the area where any barricading of the jeep road would occur. Barricading is expected to take the form of natural rocks and revegetation.

b and d) The project would not damage scenic resources, including rocks, trees, historic buildings or a State Scenic Highway. Also, the project would produce no source of light or glare.

II. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

There are no designated or historic agricultural lands within the Piedras Grandes area, and agricultural activities are an excluded use of lands with Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT*:				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
c) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

* In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997), prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model for use in assessing impacts on agricultural and farmland.

DISCUSSION

a-c) No agricultural lands exist within the proposed Piedras Grandes closure area, and the closure of the area would not effect other agricultural lands outside of the park.

III. AIR QUALITY.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The southern portion of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is located within the Salton Sea Air Basin, which is in non-attainment for particulate matter, primarily due to agricultural operations in the Imperial Valley, and wind-borne dust. Because of the distance from major urban pollution sources and agricultural activities, the Piedras Grandes area likely often has better air quality than would be typical of the Salton Sea Air Basin. There is a small amount of air pollution that is generated within the boundaries of the park. Highway-legal vehicles operating on the 500 plus miles of highways and primitive roads in the park produce exhaust emissions and contribute to the air-borne particulate matter. Currently, no agency actively monitors the air quality within the park.

		<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT*:					
a)	Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan or regulation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b)	Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
c)	Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
d)	Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations (e.g., children, the elderly, individuals with compromised respiratory or immune systems)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
e)	Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

* Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied on to make these determinations.

DISCUSSION

a-e) The proposed road closure and over-night camping exclusion would not cause an increase in air-borne pollutants within the park or greater Salton Sea Air Basin. The exclusion of motor vehicles will reduce the level of vehicle exhaust with the Piedras Grandes area over current levels. In addition, overnight campers frequently build large campfires, which also incrementally add to air-borne pollution. It is not known whether park visitors that come to the park to drive the jeep road, and camp in the Piedras Grandes area, would utilize other available campsites within the park, or simply stop coming to the park. If visitor use of the park is not changed after the closure the level of air-borne pollution would remain the same as it is currently. If visitor use drops because of the closure there will be a corresponding drop in emissions.

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The dominant vegetative community in the Piedras Grandes area is open creosote bush scrub. The typical plant species in this community include creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), various species of cholla (*Cylindropuntia* sp.), cheese bush (*Hymenoclea salsola*); galleta grass (*Pleuraphis rigidus*), desert agave (*Agave deserti*), desert lavender (*Hyptis emoryi*), jojoba (*Simmondsia chinensis*), and Mexican tea (*Ephedra californica*). Within this open scrub are large rock outcrops and boulder formations. These rock formations are also valuable wildlife habitat in that they provide shelter from wind, rain and sun, seasonal water sources in certain rock basins, and a foraging area for predators. Common wildlife species within the proposed closure area include: coyote (*Canis latrans*), bobcat (*Felis rufus*), desert cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus auduboni*), kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys* sp.), desert banded gecko (*Coleonyx variegatus variegatus*), desert horned lizard (*Phrynosoma platyrhinos calidiarum*), western chuckwalla (*Sauromalus obesus obesus*), pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), black-throated sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), black-tailed gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila melanura*), and Costa's hummingbird (*Calypte costae*).

Several sensitive plant species are found in the project vicinity, including *Mirabilis tenuiloba* (California Native Plant Society {CNPS} Category 4), *Selaginella eremophila* (CNPS 2), *Mimulus aridus* (CNPS 4), *Lupinus excubitus* var. *medius* (Federal Species of Concern, CNPS 1B), and *Penstemon clevelandii* var. *clevelandii* (Locally Limited Distribution). The only endangered species to inhabit the project area is the Peninsular bighorn sheep, a federal and state-listed species. The project area is included within federally-designated Critical Habitat for this species. The subpopulation of bighorn sheep that inhabits the Piedras Grandes area is the southernmost group in the park. It has been estimated that the current (2006, California Dept. of Fish and Game) size of this subpopulation, designated as the Carrizo Canyon subpopulation in the *Recovery Plan for Bighorn Sheep in the Peninsular Ranges, California* (USFWS 2000), is approximately 145 sheep. No clear evidence exists that the presence of motorized vehicles and overnight camping in the Piedras Grandes area have significantly affected bighorn sheep movements or survival in this area.

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or identified as a sensitive, candidate, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands, as defined by §404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

DISCUSSION

a) No impacts to sensitive species are expected from this project. Elimination of motorized vehicle activity and overnight camping is expected to reduce damage to native habitats and vandalism of natural resources.

b-c) No riparian habitats are present within the proposed closure area.

d) Movement of wildlife species may be enhanced, especially nocturnal species, by the elimination of overnight camping, which is a source of noise, light and other human activities that can deter wildlife from using the area. The elimination of noise associated with motorized vehicles in the quiet desert landscape may also enhance wildlife use of the proposed closure area.

e) This project is consistent with the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park General Plan.

f) No HCP or NCCP has been adopted for this project area. State Parks is working with the County of San Diego to plan and implement the East County Multiple Species Conservation Plan, which will include all of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. However, this plan is still in the formative stages of development. This project should be consistent with the goals of that plan by reducing impacts to natural resources.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Piedras Grandes area is in the southern portion of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, on the west side of County Route S-2, a few miles north of the southern border of ABDSP. The area lies within Townships 16 and 17 S, Range 8 E, SBBM on the Jacumba 7.5' USGS topographic quadrangle (Fig. 3). The specific area proposed for closure to motorized vehicles encompasses approximately 560 acres that includes the major portion of Section 34 and adjoining portions of Sections 33 and 35 of T 16S, R 8E and the northern portion of Sections 2 and 3, T17S, R8E. Elevation ranges from about 1800 to almost 2400 ft AMSL. The rock hills are composed of granitic materials and soils are mostly decomposed granite of various grain sizes and compactness.

As the name implies, Piedras Grandes is an area of very large rocks that compose the hills that surround a U-shaped alluvial valley that slopes gently eastward. The rock hills encompass the northern, southern and western edges of this region (Figs. 3 and 4). The rocky landscape has afforded and continues to afford many advantages to the people that have used the area in past times and continue to use it. The rocks afford wind and sun protection (Fig. 5); there are springs, natural basins to catch rainfall (Fig. 6), and water runoff from the rocks; there are places to hide and cache food and other materials. Located at the head of a huge alluvial fan that drops in elevation toward the east, this region has a very extensive viewshed (Fig. 6). Most of the cultural sites in the Piedras Grandes area are in positions that would insure a good view of comings and goings of people (friends and enemies) and animals. Vegetation consists of quite typical western Colorado Desert plant community that includes: creosote bush, brittlebush, buckwheat, ocotillo, cholla, jojoba, desert lavender, and yucca. Where water is present near springs, mesquite is present. In springtime, and if precipitation has been adequate and well-timed, an array of desert wildflowers is present. Water resources include a perennial spring at Dos Cabezas, just to the south of the proposed closure area. This spring was probably one of the reasons why the area is so rich in cultural resources.

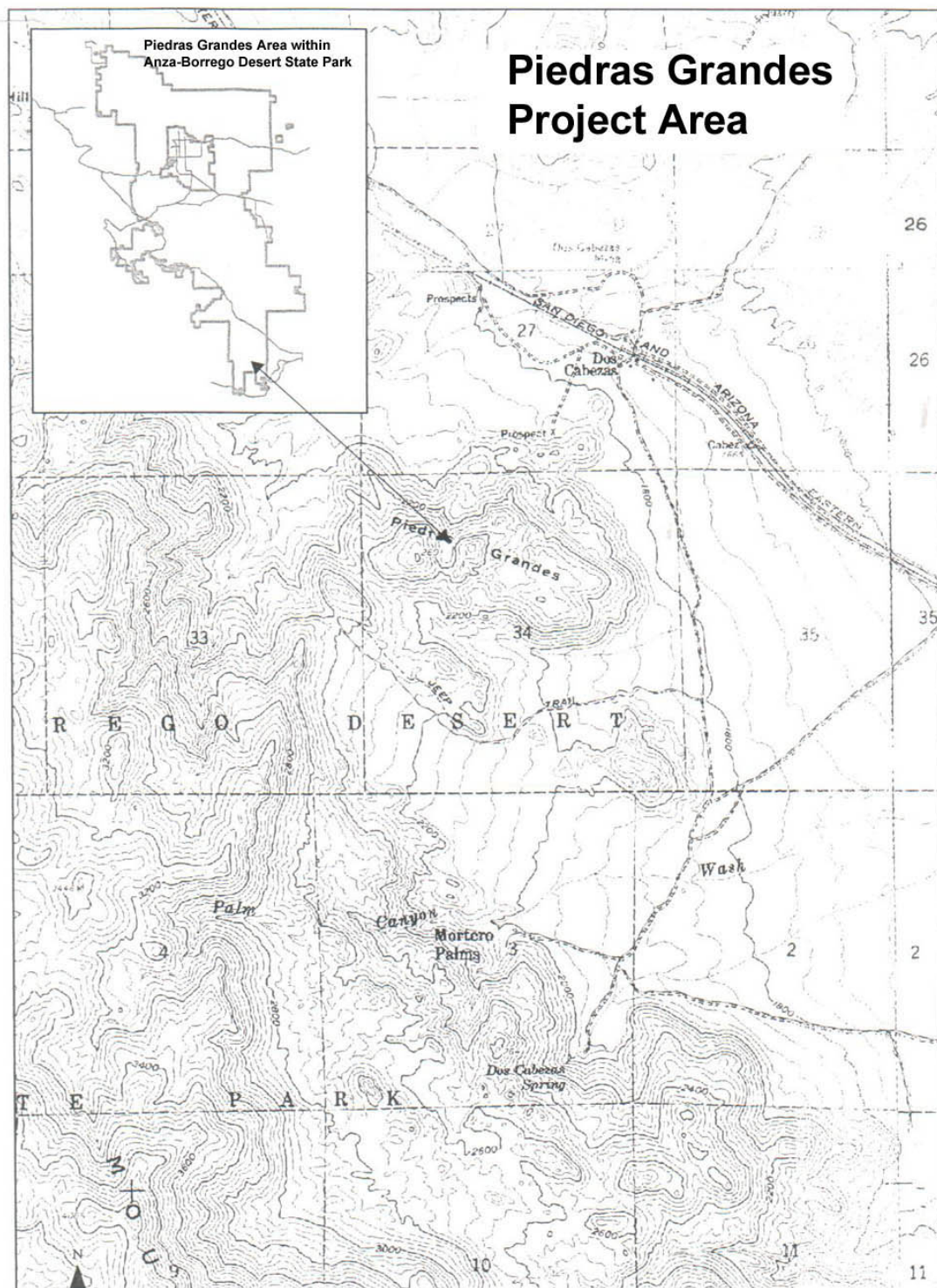


Fig. 3: The location of the Piedras Grandes area.



Figure 4: Assessment team on one of the rock hills typical of the Piedras Grandes area.



Figure 5: Rockshelter within the huge granitic boulders.



Fig. 6: Natural water catchments within the boulder formations in Piedras Grandes.



Fig. 7: One area of the jeep road crossing archaeological site. Red flag marks the location of a bedrock mortar in lower left of photo. View southeast.



Fig. 8: Typical present impacts to the Piedras Grandes area. Car camping on an archaeological site.

History of Cultural Resources Investigation

There have been a number of cultural resources surveys within the closure area, but the only systematic survey was carried out by the UC Riverside Archaeological Research Unit in the 1990s in preparation for the ABDSP General Plan document. The number of recorded archaeological sites is based on the knowledge that we have from the following investigations.

The history of scientific archaeological research in this area begins with Malcolm C. Rogers, associated with the San Diego Museum of Man, who visited the area during the 1930s and recognized the significance of its cultural resources. Prior to this time, according to Rogers, visitors, railroad workers, and looters had already impacted sites. Adan Treganza of San Diego State University conducted some work in the area during the 1940s; his name is on a site record for Dos Cabezas Spring and this site was included in an article he published in *American Antiquity* (Treganza 1942). Robert Begole, an extremely active volunteer archaeologist who focused his work on the Colorado Desert and ABDSP, recorded some of the archaeological sites during the 1970s. About the same time, Daniel McCarthy, a seasonal employee of DPR, recorded the rock art in this region as part of his project to record pictographs and petroglyphs throughout ABDSP. For a number of years, Imperial Valley College conducted some field sessions in Piedras Grandes; some site records are the result of this work. In 1995 Ken Hedges and Diane Hamann evaluated several rock art sites, among them, the “Horse and Rider” pictograph panel in Piedras Grandes (Hedges and Hamann

1995). In the late 1990s, the Archaeological Research Unit at the University of California, Riverside was awarded a contract to do inventory studies in a number of regions in the Park in preparation for the development of the ABDSP General Plan. One of the targeted areas was Piedras Grandes. During this effort within Piedras Grandes, all known sites were relocated, site records updated, and not-yet-recorded sites were recorded. As part of General Plan preparation, Associate State Archeologist Michael Sampson toured the area with Ms. Carmen Lucas, Kwaymii Elder, who prepared a pictorial assessment document. In 2005 an assessment and then the conservation of the damaged "Horse and Rider" pictograph panel was carried out (Dean 2005). From 2005-2006, Associate State Archeologist, Joan Schneider, assisted by the trained volunteers of the Colorado Desert Archaeology Society, conducted a formal assessment of all impacts that were occurring in the Piedras Grandes area. From the data collected during this assessment, recommendations were made; among the recommendations was the closure to motorized vehicles of the existing jeep road through the heart of the Piedras Grandes area.(Schneider 2006).

Cultural Resources of the Piedras Grandes Area

The significance of the concentration of prehistoric cultural resources in the Piedras Grandes area was recognized early in the 20th century (see above). Within the area recommended for closure to motorized vehicles are a minimum of 31 recorded archaeological sites, the vast majority of which are prehistoric. There have been no scientific excavations conducted at any of these sites, although major sites have been illegally looted over the years. It is apparent from accounts in site records and from observations during the UCR work in the area and the 2006 Assessment by Schneider and CDAS, that significant cultural resources are present at many sites and that these have been seriously compromised in the past and currently are continuing to be impacted by certain types of visitor use.

The cultural resource sites fall into a number of categories:

- Large, complex habitation sites with rockshelters, multiple bedrock processing stations that include mortars, basins, and slicks, rock art, evidence of buried deposits, and a surface scatter of a variety of artifact types that include bone, marine shell fragments, ceramics, flaked stone artifacts, and processing tools such as manos, pestles, and hammers. These sites were probably used repeatedly on a seasonal basis by groups that returned to the same locations year after year. These sites are located at the base of or within rocky hills.
- Large campsites in relative open environments along washes or in dune deposits. These sites have evidence of repeated use and have surface evidence of human use and buried deposits. They may contain ceramics, bone, flaked stone artifacts and debris, processing tools, and occasional bedrock processing stations.
- Food processing stations that are centered around isolated bedrock outcrops and may include mortars, basins, slicks and the hand stones that were used on or in these processing features, as well as a few other artifacts on the surface.
- Small scatters of artifacts consisting mainly of ceramics or flaked stone.
- Locations where cremations occurred and likely ceremonies that accompanied them.
- Natural water catchments that trapped and contained rainwater when there was precipitation.
- Quarry outcrops where stone was removed to make stone tools.

- Scatters of historic artifacts, usually made of glass or metal or both.

Significance of the Cultural Resources

The cultural resources of the Piedras Grandes area, particularly those of the area proposed for closure to motorized vehicles represent one of the densest concentrations of cultural resources within ABDSP with 31 recorded archaeological sites within the proposed closure area; there are many other recorded sites in the Piedras Grandes region both to the north and south, but these are either just outside ABDSP boundaries or are not readily accessible from the jeep road. Sites within the proposed closure area include rock art of the pictograph type (CA-SDI-1303; -SDI-1304; -SDI-15,640. These sites are considered by Native Peoples as “Sacred Sites.” A rock-art conservation/restoration project for just one of these sites used over \$13,000 in State funds. The damages that were repaired were caused by campers who built fires inside the rockshelter as well as by visitors defacing the rock art panel with crayoned, charcoaled, and scratched graffiti. Other rock art panels in the proposed closure area have been similarly defaced.

Several prehistoric sites bear substantive evidence that they were used as living sites over a long period of time (CA-SDI-1290, -SDI-1303, -SDI-1304, -SDI-15,634, -SDI-15,639, -SDI-15640, -SDI-15,642) most likely during the winter and early spring seasons. The feature and artifact types indicate that a variety of activities were carried out and that people returned to these same locations again and again throughout a long span of time. Human remains have been documented at several sites (CA-SDI-15,639, -SDI-15642) and it is highly likely that additional human remains are present, both on the surface and in buried deposits at other sites. Some areas may have been used for ceremonial events, as is evidenced by the presence of pipe fragments. These facts add to the particular concern of present-day Native Peoples, especially the *Kumeyaay* and the *Kwaaymii*, about protection and preservation of the area. The observed depth of the buried archaeological deposits seen in the road cut and drainage profiles in several areas suggests that a number of prehistoric sites would be Eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because of the information that the subsurface deposits contain.

Other sites likely represent prehistoric seasonal encampments, cremation locations, food-procurement and food-processing activities. An occasional site is composed of only ceramic fragments or stone-tool debitage. There are also historic sites, only one of which has been recorded (CA-SDI-15,320). There are locations where clay may have been collected for prehistoric ceramic manufacturing; there is at least one site that includes a quarry for quartz to make stone tools. The larger prehistoric sites contain evidence that some materials (especially marine shell and good-quality toolstone) were brought to the locations from areas outside ABDSP; this is particularly valuable to researchers because it documents long-distance trade networks of the past. Buried deposits likely contain organic materials that could be used to develop a chronological framework for the Piedras Grandes area.

None of the prehistoric or historical cultural resource sites have been examined using scientific excavation methods. There is no comprehensive regional overview. It is evident that looters

have illegally dug holes in search for artifacts, especially at CA-SDI-1304 (Fig. 7). This looting was mentioned in site records going as far back at the 1930s. The jeep road that is proposed for closure to motorized vehicles unfortunately runs through several of the larger and very significant prehistoric cultural sites (Fig. 8) and affords easy accessibility to others.

Integrity

The surface integrity of most sites, especially those on the the jeep road and in proximity to it, as well as along the main dirt road running north-south toward Dos Cabezas Spring has been compromised. In general, the integrity of buried deposits (midden) at sites appears to be intact, with the exception of portions of the buried cultural deposit at CA-SDI-1304 (Figs. 8 and 9).

Heavy visitor use (both recreational and as an entry point for illegal migrant workers from Mexico; see Schneider 2006), and ignorance of or unwillingness to follow ABDSP Wilderness Area rules have caused serious damages. The sites along the jeep trail, have fair-to-poor integrity. The sites that maintain a good or high degree of integrity with little sign of disturbance tend to be at some distance from the jeep trail or relatively inaccessible toward the top of rock hills. Although significant archaeological sites have been intentionally damaged by vandals such as looters, collectors, and graffiti-makers, campers and other visitors have caused impacts through ignorance (Fig. 10).



Fig. 9: Hole dug at CA-SDI-1304 in 2006; artifacts were visible within the hole.



Fig. 10: CA-SDI-1290 with the remains of an illegal campfire, an activity repeated very often at this site.

An assessment study (Schneider 2006) indicates that easy accessibility from the jeep road with visitors being able to drive their cars or campers onto or up to sites increases damages and that most damages are from overnight camping and building campfires. Observations here seem to indicate that large quantities of food, beverages, firewood, and water are used at locations that can be accessed by motorized vehicles and that visitors are not likely to carry these items far from their cars or campers. For these reasons, staff believes that access to the area can still be maintained for day hikers and others who wish to experience the proposed closure area while eliminating motorized vehicles, will minimize items cached on sites, garbage, the use of firearms, and other impacts.

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, as defined in §15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource, pursuant to §15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

- | c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries? ☒ ☐ ☐ X

DISCUSSION

- a-c) The proposed project would substantially reduce the current level of impacts to cultural resources, including possible human remains.

VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Piedras Grandes area in the southern part of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is largely underlain by Cretaceous age plutonic rocks that are part of the Peninsular Ranges Batholith. These rocks crystallized at depth from magma that was intruded into the upper crust. The minerals in the 96 million-year-old tonolite-granodiorite rocks of the La Posta plutonic intrusion at Piedras Grandes principally include two feldspars, quartz, and minor amounts of biotite mica. Erosion over the past 50+ million years of the metamorphic rocks in the overlying crust has exposed the plutonic rocks at the surface. The east flank of the mountains was uplifted a little over a million years ago, an event which provides a maximum (no older than) age for the Piedras Grandes features.

The Piedras Grandes giant boulders are a result of spheroidal (or spherical) weathering of the equigranular crystalline granitic rocks. As plutonic magma cools it develops rectilinear fracture patterns called joints. At the surface, these cracks provide access to water which chemically degrades the minerals, and causes the granitic rock to decompose. Where any two or three fracture planes intersect at about 90 degrees, more weathering takes place. Eventually, this results in rounded boulder shapes. Spheroidal weathering occurs in granitic rocks throughout the Peninsular Ranges, but has resulted in some of the largest and best formed examples at Piedras Grandes.

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map, issued by the State Geologist for the area, or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? (Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
iv) Landslides?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable, as a result of the project and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1997),
creating substantial risks to life or property?

e)	Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste disposal systems, where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
f)	Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site, or unique geologic feature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

DISCUSSION

- a) The proposed project would not expose people to the effects of seismic or landslide activity above what is currently present.
- b) The removal of motorized vehicles from the Peidras Grandes closure area would reduce a potentially significant erosion source from the jeep road and surrounding bajada.
- c-d) The proposed project would have no effects upon soil stability, nor would it be effected by existing unstable soils.
- e) The project does not propose to build any septic or sewer systems. In fact, this type of infrastructure is prohibited in State Wilderness areas.
- f) By closing the Piedras Grandes area to motorized vehicles and overnight camping, the potential threats to any paleontological or geological resources of significance will be reduced. Most of the resource damage and vandalism that has occurred appears to have resulted from the activities proposed for exclusion.

VII. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

No known hazardous materials are known to be present at the Piedras Grandes site, and the closure would reduce the risk of hazardous materials being illegally taken to the site and dumped.

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and/or accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials, substances, or waste into the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites, compiled pursuant to Government Code §65962.5, and, as a result, create a significant hazard to the public or environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
e) Be located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport? If so, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
f) Be located in the vicinity of a private airstrip? If so, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death from wildland fires, including areas where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

DISCUSSION

a - h) Hazardous materials are in no way associated with the implementation of the Piedras Grandes Road Closure Project. The road closure and elimination of overnight camping

should reduce the possibility of park visitors using the Piedras Grandes area being exposed to hazardous materials, which could be brought into the area by vehicle transport and/or campers.

VIII. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Piedras Grandes area consists of a series of large boulder formations arranged in a “U” shaped pattern surrounding a broad sandy alluvial fan formation that flows to the east. While most surface water movement is sheet flow over the alluvial fan, several ephemeral desert washes flow through the Piedras Grandes area, flowing from west to east. The largest of these washes is Palm Canyon Wash. There are also certain rock basins that likely hold water during storms (Figure 4), and there are several natural springs that occur nearby but outside of the closure area (Dos Cabezas Spring and Mortero Palms).

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge, such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level that would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial on- or off-site erosion or siltation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in on- or off-site flooding?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
f) Substantially degrade water quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area, as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map, or other flood hazard delineation map?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
h) Place structures that would impede or redirect flood flows within a 100-year flood hazard area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death from flooding, including flooding resulting from the failure of a levee or dam?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
j) Result in inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

DISCUSSION

- a -j) The propose project will have no effect upon the hydrology, groundwater, water quality, drainage patterns or flood characteristics of the Piedras Grandes area.

IX. LAND USE AND PLANNING.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Piedras Grandes area supports no human dwellings, and is designated in the park General Plan as State Wilderness, with the exception of the jeep road itself which is classified as “backcountry” use. Camping is currently allowed along roads classified as “backcountry” in areas where no native vegetation will be damaged. However, the District Superintendent has the authority through a Superintendent’s Order to restrict access in areas where certain recreational activities are damaging park resources.

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Physically divide an established community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b) Conflict with the applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of any agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to, a general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

DISCUSSION

- a) The project would not divide an established community. The nearest community is the unincorporated town of Ocotillo, population 300, located approximately nine miles to the east of Piedras Grandes.
- b) The proposed road closure and camping restriction is consistent with the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park General Plan.
- c) No NCCP or HCP is currently in place in the Piedras Grandes area.

X. MINERAL RESOURCES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Piedras Grandes closure area, with the exception of the jeep road, is designated State Wilderness land, and unavailable for mineral extraction activities. No significant mineral resources are known to exist in the area, although exploration has not been conducted since the park was established in the 1930s.

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that is or would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

DISCUSSION

- a) Any mineral resources that are currently in the Peidras Grandes area are already unavailable for extraction because of the State Wilderness designation.
- b) No locally important mineral resource is known in the closure area, and exclusion of mineral extraction is consistent with the park General Plan. The proposed closure will make no changes in the current status of mineral resources in the Piedras Grandes area.

XI. NOISE.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Piedras Grandes area is located in a remote and relatively isolated portion of southern Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The primary source of existing noise is motor vehicles along the primitive road that borders the eastern boundary of the proposed closure area, the road that leads to Dos Cabezas Spring, and the jeep road leading into Piedras Grandes. This noise source is sporadic and most common during the November through April “cool” season in the desert. Activities from overnight campers can also be a source of noise.

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Generate or expose people to noise levels in excess of standards established in a local general plan or noise ordinance, or in other applicable local, state, or federal standards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b) Generate or expose people to excessive groundborne vibrations or groundborne noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
c) Create a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project (above levels without the project)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
d) Create a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project, in excess of noise levels existing without the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
e) Be located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport? If so, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
f) Be in the vicinity of a private airstrip? If so, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

DISCUSSION

a -e) The proposed project would reduce the two primary sources of human-generated noise within the Piedras Grandes area by eliminating public vehicle access and overnight camping. No other sources of noise would be changed by this project.

XII. POPULATION AND HOUSING

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Piedras Grandes closure area supports no housing or business facilities, and is designated as State Wilderness to assure that the site remains in its natural undeveloped state.

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

DISCUSSION

a) The proposed closure will not induce any population growth in the Piedras Grandes area, or any other area.

b-c) No housing will be displaced necessitating the construction of replacement housing. Overnight recreational campers that have used the Piedras Grandes area will be displaced as the closure take effect, but many other camping sites exist in the southern portion of the park, and no additional campsite would be necessary to accommodate displaced campers.

XIII. PUBLIC SERVICES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Piedras Grandes area of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park currently provides no infrastructure or facilities for camping or visitor use. The closure of the Piedras Grandes area to motorized vehicles and overnight camping will not require the provision of public services. A park ranger currently patrols the area, and this will continue, perhaps at a higher level initially, to enforce the new closure policy.

		<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:					
a)	Result in significant environmental impacts from construction associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
	Fire protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
	Police protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
	Schools?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
	Parks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
	Other public facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

DISCUSSION

- a) No new government-sponsored facilities will be required by the proposed project.

XIV. RECREATION.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The proposed Piedras Grandes closure area, with the exception of the jeep road, is designated as State Wilderness, and as such is currently open to day use hiking (including off-trail), mountain biking and equestrian use on existing designated roads and trails. No water, restroom, trash pick up, or other camping facilities are currently provided within the proposed Piedras Grandes closure area, and any materials or trash that are taken into the area must be packed out. No specific data has been collected to count visitor use of the remote proposed closure area. Primitive camps in the park such as Culp Valley and Yaqui Wells have been estimated to accommodate up to 5,000 campers annually. These campsites have restroom facilities and designated campsites. In years with lower than average rainfall, and poor wildflower displays, the visitation rate can be much lower. The Piedras Grandes site has no formal camping facilities and is much more remote from other park facilities, and an educated estimate is that only 500-1000 overnight campers may use the area during an average year. Visitor activities would be concentrated primarily in the cooler November to April time period.

Highway-legal motorized vehicle may currently use the existing jeep road, and any overnight camping from vehicles must be confined to within one car width away from the road in a location where no damage to existing vegetation or other resources will occur, or within 200 yards of a water source. Evidence provided in the 2006 Cultural Resources Assessment of the Piedras Grandes Area (Schneider 2006) indicates that numerous visitors are not abiding by park regulations, and car camping is occurring in a number of areas away from the jeep road, and that this activity is severely damaging cultural resources in the area. Trash is being left behind, wood for illegal campfires is being stockpiled in the area, and active vandalism and/or removal of cultural artifacts is occurring. The Anza-Borrego Desert State Park General Plan allows the restriction or closure of areas to motorized vehicle traffic and camping if the District or Park Superintendent believes that existing recreational activities in these areas are impacting and degrading sensitive biological or cultural resources. For this reason the Park is proposing the Superintendent's Order to close the Piedras Grandes area to those activities causing the bulk of the damage to the area.

There are over 100 miles of paved roads that traverse or border on Anza-Borrego Desert State Park which are maintained by Caltrans or the County of San Diego. State Parks owns and maintains an additional 6 miles of paved roads. Additionally, there are approximately 410 miles of existing unpaved primitive roads in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, and 100 miles of trails. All paved and primitive roads in the park are open to highway-legal motorized vehicles, unless designated otherwise. The 1.3 miles of jeep road proposed for closure represents only 0.25 percent of accessible roadway for street-legal motorized vehicles within the park, and the loss of overnight vehicle-related camping along the 1.3 mile-long jeep trail represents a potential 0.3 percent loss of road-side primitive camping opportunities within the park. There are many primitive camping opportunities associated with unpaved roadways within the park in the vicinity of the proposed closure area, including Dos Cabezas Spring, as well as more developed camping facilities at nearby Bow Willow and Mountain Palm Springs Campgrounds. The closure of 560 acres out of over 400,000 acres of State Wilderness lands to overnight camping represents a loss of 0.14 percent of wilderness access, which would be a less than significant impact. The purpose of the closure would be to conserve and restore significant

cultural resources, which are valuable not only for cultural and scientific purposes, but also for public education purposes. State Parks will enhance public recreation in the area by providing additional interpretive displays that day-use visitors may enjoy, and which will give them a greater understanding and appreciation of the archeology and history of the park. Despite the loss of motorized vehicle use and over-night camping opportunities, the area will remain open to day hikers, equestrians and mountain bikers.

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities, such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

DISCUSSION

- a) The closure of the Piedras Grandes area to over-night camping may redirect park visitors to other areas within the park, including Bow Willow Campground. Approximately 50,000 people per year camp at Bow Willow. A small number of extra campers at Bow Willow, or along primitive roads in the park outside of Piedras Grandes is not expected to be a significant impact to park resources, or require additional camping facilities. It is also possible that with Piedras Grandes closed to over-night camping, that visitors accustomed to using this area may not come to the park.
- b) No developed camping facilities are being removed by the proposed closure, and no new facilities will be required once the closure is in place.

XV. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Over 100 miles of paved roads pass through or lie adjacent to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, but are maintained by the California Department of Transportation or the County of San Diego. State Parks maintains an additional six miles of paved roads in the park. There are 410 miles of unpaved primitive roads in the park that are open to highway legal vehicles, and an additional 100 miles of trails open to hiking, biking and equestrian use.

Road access to the Piedras Grandes area of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is from County Road S2 to the east. Two primitive roads provide access to the Piedras Grandes area from S2, Dos Cabezas Road and Mortero Canyon Road. Mortero Canyon Road intersects with Dos Cabezas Road north of the jeep trail. Dos Cabezas Road dead-ends at Dos Cabezas Spring. The 1.3 mile long jeep trail proposed for closure intersects with the road to Dos Cabezas Spring a little over one mile to the northeast of the end of the road at the spring, north of Palm Canyon Wash (Fig. 2). The jeep trail proposed for closure to motorized vehicles is a dead-end road leading to an overlook viewpoint. The trail forms no loop, nor does it provide access to other parts of the park. The trail closure project would provide a small vehicle parking area at the trail intersection with the primitive road to Dos Cabezas Spring, allowing for day use by park visitors seeking to hike, bike, or ride horses into the Piedras Grandes area.

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Cause a substantial increase in traffic, in relation to existing traffic and the capacity of the street system (i.e., a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b) Exceed, individually or cumulatively, the level of service standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
c) Cause a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location, that results in substantial safety risks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
d) Contain a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or a dangerous intersection) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment) that would substantially increase hazards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
f) Result in inadequate parking capacity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

DISCUSSION

- a-b) The proposed road closure would eliminate traffic on the jeep trail through the Piedras Grandes area. Traffic on this primitive road is low to begin with, and any shift in traffic to surrounding dirt roads is expected to be minimal. Traffic levels on all of the primitive roads in the vicinity may be reduced if the Piedras Grandes area is closed to overnight camping, which is one of the main sources of traffic to begin with.
- c) Air traffic patterns within the area would not be changed by the road closure
- d) Closure of the jeep trail would not increase road hazards.
- e) Emergency access would not be precluded by the project. Park ranger patrol vehicles or other emergency vehicles would still have the ability to use the jeep trail in emergencies.
- f) A small parking area will be constructed at the intersection of the jeep trail and the road to Dos Cabezas Spring, on already disturbed land, to accommodate day-use visitors wanting to access the Piedras Grandes area.
- g) This road closure is consistent with the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park General Plan.

XVI. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

No utilities or service systems are currently provided within the proposed Peidras Grandes Closure Area of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, and none will be required to implement this project.

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Exceed wastewater treatment restrictions or standards of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Would the construction of these facilities cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Would the construction of these facilities cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources or are new or expanded entitlements needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
e) Result in a determination, by the wastewater treatment provider that serves or may serve the project, that it has adequate capacity to service the project's anticipated demand, in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations as they relate to solid waste?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

DISCUSSION

a-g) No utilities or services are currently provided to the public in the Piedras Grandes area, and none will be provided by this closure project. The Piedras Grandes area is designated as State Wilderness, and as such, precludes construction activities related to utilities and other infrastructure.

CHAPTER 4

MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

	<u>POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION</u>	<u>LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT</u>	<u>NO IMPACT</u>
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
b) Have the potential to eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
c) Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, other current projects, and probably future projects?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
d) Have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on humans, either directly or indirectly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

DISCUSSION

- a) The proposed project does not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment to fish or wildlife species or their habitats. The closure of the Piedras Grandes area to motorized vehicles and overnight camping has the potential to enhance the area for wildlife and plant resources by reducing impacts from soil erosion from vehicles, loss of vegetation from camping activities, reduction of human trash, and reduction in human-generated noise.
- b) The proposed closure's primary purpose is to reduce the threat of damage, theft, and vandalism to significant cultural resources in the Piedras Grandes area. The impact assessment carried out by State Parks demonstrated the threats to these sensitive resources, and the closure would significantly reduce those threats.
- c) The cumulative loss of motorized vehicle access and overnight camping opportunities in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park due to the proposed closure is minimal. Many other locations are available within the park to enjoy these activities. No other constraints on motorized vehicles or camping in the park are anticipated at this time

- d) The project would eliminate motorized vehicle access and overnight camping in the 560-acre Piedras Grandes closure area. This loss of these recreational opportunities would not be significant in the context of similar recreational opportunities available within the park as a whole. The closure area would still be available for day-use hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian use.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES

No mitigation measures are required to be implemented by DPR as part of the Piedras Grandes Road Closure Project. No potentially significant impacts would occur from the project.

CHAPTER 6

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